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COORDINATION QUESTIONS

Note by the Secretary-General pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/78

1. A principal and growing responsibility of the United Nations is to provide humanitarian assistance to victims of disasters and emergencies. Over the years, the organizations of the United Nations system have been called upon to respond to an increasing number of emergencies, many of which have affected large populations across vast areas. A number of such emergencies have been complex in nature and protracted in duration. These have highlighted the great importance of effective leadership and coordination in ensuring swift and coherent responses by the international community. The smooth transition from relief efforts to rehabilitation and development must also be ensured. The effective discharge by the United Nations of its role, particularly in mobilizing the efforts of the organizations of the United Nations system and in working closely with bilateral agencies and non-governmental organizations, has become all the more important.

2. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1990/78 of 27 July 1990, requested the Secretary-General to undertake a review of the experience, capacity and coordination arrangements of the United Nations system in assisting refugees, displaced persons and returnees. Given the importance of this review, the Secretary-General requested a senior consultant, Mr. Jacques Cuenod, to undertake an independent study. That study, containing a number of interesting proposals deserving serious consideration by the Council, is annexed.**

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* E/1991/100.

** To be issued separately.

3. The Secretary-General is most mindful of other studies that have been undertaken on this matter and is keenly aware that this subject is receiving the attention of many Governments at the highest level. In this connection, the Secretary-General greatly welcomes the views being expressed by Governments concerning the need to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations in order to ensure timely, coherent and effective responses to emergency situations.

4. Given the critical need to establish the most appropriate arrangements as expeditiously as possible, the Secretary-General will follow the deliberations of the Council attentively in order to take the views of Governments fully into account in formulating his conclusions on this important subject. It would be his intention to report further to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session.